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Letter dated 23 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to bring to your attention the conclusions on the Great Lakes region issued on 16 July 2001 by the General Affairs Council of the European Union (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Jean **De Ruyt**
Permanent Representative of Belgium to the United Nations

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Conclusions of the General Affairs Council of the European Union on the Great Lakes region, issued on 16 July 2001

In accordance with the Common Position concerning conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa, adopted on 14 May 2001, the General Affairs Council is in favour of an extensive, consistent, coordinated European Union role in the region and is committed to working to that end. The desired consistency should be found in particular in our political perceptions, our diplomatic action and our aid and cooperation policies and should make for a more regional approach in responding to crises. This approach will also aim to improve coordination with the United Nations and with international financial institutions.

The Council has been informed of the Belgian action plan for the Great Lakes region.

With regard to developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Council considers that the window of opportunity opened up earlier in the year remains available in spite of real risks of a deterioration in the situation. The Council agrees to remain particularly vigilant concerning the three key aspects of the Lusaka process: the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation plan, the withdrawal of foreign troops and national dialogue. The Council welcomes the Commission's decision to provide the local population with rapid emergency aid. The Council states its intention of encouraging a gradual and balanced resumption of aid and cooperation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such re-engagement will be dependent upon progress in implementing the Lusaka Agreement, which chiefly means a genuine, verifiable desire for peace between the parties and an operational inter-Congolese dialogue, with realistic objectives and a compact time frame. In this connection, it is important that the meeting announced for 20 August by the facilitator, Sir Ketumile Masire, go ahead and not be postponed again. The Council will accordingly ensure the Union's support to initiatives in the context of disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and of the inter-Congolese dialogue under the supervision of the facilitator.

The Council voices its concern at developments in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and recommends that the European Union's Special Representative for the Great Lakes report back, foster bilateral talks between the region's Heads of State and contact the United Nations Secretary-General in order for him to designate a pilot institution for devising and implementing a disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation plan.

As regards Burundi, the Council welcomes the announcement by the mediator, Nelson Mandela, of an agreement on leadership of the transition, which could enable the political impasse to be overcome and ensure the implementation of the transition. However, the Council remains seriously concerned about the security and humanitarian situation, which is deteriorating in a worrying way. The Union would point out that the Security Council highlighted the responsibilities borne by States in

the region for Burundi's crisis and urgently appeals to the States of the region to bring their influence to bear on all the main parties involved in the conflict. The Union is considering means of increasing its assistance, in expertise and financial resources, for the efforts of the mediator, Mr. Mandela, in order to ensure a coordinated, ongoing negotiation process with the rebel movements.

The Council considers that efforts must be made to ensure the re-establishment of the rule of law operating in accordance with the principles of good governance and the rehabilitation of the social and economic structures of the countries in the region.

The forthcoming visits to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and to the region by Commissioner Nielson and the Secretary-General/High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy will provide an opportunity to reaffirm the Union's firm commitment to the peace processes and its solidarity with the region's long-suffering peoples.